



**LA PORTE COUNTY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**

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**Richard Mrozinski
President**

**Joseph Haney
Vice President**

**Sheila Matias
Member**

LA PORTE COUNTY COMMISSIONERS REORGANIZATION MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, January 6, 2020 La Porte County Complex Meeting Room 3 at 10:00 a.m.

via Zoom/In-Person

Auditor Tim Stabosz called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. followed by the Pledge of Allegiance led by Commissioner Rich Mrozinski.

Chief Deputy Auditor Vaughn Galloway called the roll: Commissioner Haney - Present; Commissioner Matias - Present; Commissioner Mrozinski - Present. Quorum present therefore meeting commenced.

Auditor Tim Stabosz conducted the Election of Officers. Commissioner Sheila Matias nominated Commissioner Rich Mrozinski to be President; Seconded by Commissioner Joe Haney. Motion carried. Auditor Tim Stabosz turned the meeting over to President Mrozinski. Commissioner Matias then nominated Joe Haney as Vice President. Commissioner Mrozinski seconded. Motion carried.

Considered the agenda. Commissioner Haney motioned to remove item 15 'a' and added two additional items: Extension of the Emergency Paid Sick Leave Act Policy Enacted Under The Families First Coronavirus Response Act and La Porte County Covid-19 Employee and Operations Policy - Amended. Commissioner Matias seconded. Motion carried. Commissioner Haney then motioned to accept the amended agenda. Commissioner Matias seconded. Motion carried.

Considered approval of December 16, 2020 minutes. Commissioner Matias motioned to approve. Commissioner Haney seconded. Motion carried.

Auditor Tim Stabosz read the Claims with Payroll ending 12/18/2020 - \$1,467,676.54; 1/4/2021 - \$1,166,617.50 and Miscellaneous claims - \$1,273,416.05. Auditor Stabosz stated the amount for payroll ending 12/18/2020 included bonuses for employees. Commissioner Matias motioned to approve. Prior to seconding the motion Commissioner Haney said he reviewed the claims and the word *Miscellaneous* is 'vague' and perhaps the word 'budgeted' should be used, with that Commissioner Haney seconded the motion. Motion carried. Commissioner Matias suggested 'Operational' claims. Auditor Stabosz stated the discussion could be taken offline due to not sure if all claims are operational or not. Attorney Shaw Friedman said it is a definitional issue that makes clear to the public clarification of the claims and as long as the Commission changes the wording on record it should be fine. Commissioner Haney motioned to change the word from *Miscellaneous* to *Operational* going forward on the agendas. Commissioner Matias seconded. Motion carried. Operational will now replace *Miscellaneous* for claims.

ORIGINAL

Considered Appointment of Department Heads and Professional Advisors. President Mrozinski read each appointment individually then vote was taken.

Insurance Agencies of Record - Michiana Insurance & General Insurance Services; Commissioner Matias motioned to approve. Commissioner Haney seconded. Motion carried.

County Financial Advisor - Cender and Company; Commissioner Matias motioned to approve. Commissioner Haney seconded. Motion carried.

County Attorney - Friedman and Associates; Commissioner Matias motioned to approve. President Mrozinski stepped down to second. Motion carried. 2 – aye; 1 – nay

Commissioners' Executive Assistant - Diane Gonzales; Commissioner Haney motioned to approve.

Commissioner Matias seconded. Motion carried.

Animal Shelter Director - Jane Bernard; Commissioner Haney motioned to approve. Commissioner Matias seconded. Motion carried.

Community Corrections Director - Rochelle Brown; Commissioner Matias motioned to approve. Commissioner Haney seconded. Motion carried.

County Engineer - Jerry 'Jay' Sullivan; Commissioner Matias motioned to approve. Commissioner Haney seconded. Motion carried.

County Highway Superintendent - Duane Werner; Commissioner Matias motioned to approve. Commissioner Haney seconded. Motion carried.

Director of Planning and Regulatory Affairs - Mitch Bishop; Commissioner Matias motioned to approve. Commissioner Haney seconded. Motion carried.

Director of Office of Community and Economic Development - Tony Rodriguez; Commissioner Matias motioned to approve. Commissioner Haney seconded. Motion carried.

EMA Director - Larry Butcher; Commissioner Matias motioned to approve. Commissioner Haney seconded. Motion carried.

EMS Director - Andrew McGuire; Commissioner Matias motioned to approve. Commissioner Haney seconded. Motion carried.

E-911 Director - Steve Alt; Commissioner Matias motioned to approve. Commissioner Haney seconded. Motion carried.

Information Technology Director - Darlene Hale; Commissioner Matias motioned to approve. Commissioner Haney seconded. Motion carried.

Museum Curator - Keri Teller Jakubowski; Commissioner Matias motioned to approve. Commissioner Haney seconded. Motion carried.

Parks and Recreation Director - Jeremy Sobacki; Commissioner Matias motioned to approve. Commissioner Haney seconded. Motion carried.

Right-To-Know/HazMat - Jeff Hamilton; Commissioner Matias motioned to approve. Commissioner Haney seconded. Motion carried.

Director of Facilities - Larry Levendowski; Commissioner Matias motioned to approve. Commissioner Haney seconded. Motion carried.

Veterans Service Officer - Joe Golec; Commissioner Matias motioned to approve. Commissioner Haney seconded. Motion carried.

Weights & Measures Inspector - Mike Quinn; Commissioner Matias motioned to approve. Commissioner Haney seconded. Motion carried.

Auditor Tim Stabosz – “Point of order, your Honor. The Clerk did not get the vote from Mr. Haney for Legal representation.” Commissioner Haney, “It was a Nay.” President Mrozinski, “It was a 2-1 vote.” Auditor Stabosz, “Thank you.”

Commissioner Sheila Matias stated how much talent the county has with all of the employees and she thanked them all.

Commissioner Haney suggested reading the Boards and Commissions at once then take a vote.

ORIGINAL

Considered Board and Commission Appointments.

La Crosse Public Library - Angela Vernon
Michigan City Public Library - Dr. Mark Jacobi
Wanatah Public Library - Kelli Scurlock
Alcoholic Beverage Commission - John McDaniel
Animal Control Advisory Commission - Lisa Polazzi, DVM; Dr. Patrick Dorrah and LuAnn Troxel
Board of Construction Review - Marcella Kunstek; John Carr; Robert Byers and James Pressel III
Board of Health - Dr. Mark Nelson and Lauren Arnold
Board of Zoning Appeals - Adam Koronka
Convention & Visitors Bureau - Lea Anne Jones
Drainage Board - Joe Cuson and Hugh Glasgow
Fairgrounds Management & Events Corporation - Joe Haney
Park & Recreation - Amanda Nebelung
Pioneer Cemetery Commission - Edward Marks
Plan Commission - Adam Koronka
Property Tax Assessment Board of Appeals - Hassan Dabagia, Matt Bernacchi and Amy Blind
Public Defender Board - V. Michael Drayton
Redevelopment Commission - Terry Larson, Joe Coar, Scott Cooley and Joe Haney
Regional Bus Authority - Dion Bergeron
Regional Sewer & Water District - Mitch Bishop

Commissioner Haney motioned to approve all appointments to the Boards and Commissions. Commissioner Matias seconded. Motion carried.

Considered Commissioner Liaison Appointments. President Mrozinski read the lists.

Animal Control Board – Commissioner Mrozinski
Community Corrections - Commissioner Mrozinski
Drainage Board - Commissioner Mrozinski
E-911 - Commissioner Matias
Fair Board - Commissioner Mrozinski
Fairgrounds Management & Events Corporation - Commissioner Haney
Highway Department - Commissioner Mrozinski
Job Evaluation - Commissioner Mrozinski
Juvenile Service Center - Commissioner Matias
Kankakee River Basin & Yellow River Basin Development Commission - Commissioner Matias
Museum - Commissioner Mrozinski
Northwest Indiana Regional Plan Commission - Commissioner Matias
Pioneer Cemetery Commission - Commissioner Mrozinski
Plan Commission - Commissioner Haney
Redevelopment Commission - Commissioner Haney
Regional Sewer District - Commissioner Mrozinski
Right-To-Know - Commissioner Matias
Solid Waste - Commissioner Mrozinski, Commissioner Matias, Commissioner Haney
Weights & Measures - Commissioner Matias
Workforce Development - Commissioner Haney

Commissioner Haney motioned to approve Liaisons appointments. Commissioner Matias seconded. Motion carried.

ORIGINAL

Considered Designation of Publication: Legal Notice/Commission Meeting Agendas/Public Notice.

Commissioner Haney read into the record:

Pursuant to IC 5-3-1, the La Porte County Board of Commissioners moved that the following newspapers be designated the newspapers of qualified publications in which La Porte County Commissioners shall publish notices as required by law: La Porte County Herald-Dispatch and Westville Indicator/Regional News.

This designation shall be subject to each of the above submitting to the Board of Commissioners, on or before January 6, 2021, written confirmation that the newspaper or qualified publication meets all criteria to be designated as a newspaper or qualified publication under Indiana Code 5-3-1, et seq.

Commissioner Haney motioned to approve the publications. Commissioner Matias seconded but asked if 'virtual' or to include the website can be added. Commissioner Haney amended his motion by adding 'posting to our county website' to this Designation of Publication for the 2021 year. Commissioner Matias seconded. Motion carried.

Considered Commissioners' meeting dates for 2021. Commissioner Matias motioned to approve. Commissioner Haney seconded. Motion carried.

Public Comment

Rodney McCormick - 617 Union Street Michigan City - Congratulated Commissioner Haney. Shared his displeasures with the County Attorney. Commissioner Matias intervened by saying this is not the place to discuss issues about employees. President Mrozinski agreed. Commissioner Haney stated the comments should be allowed as long as Mr. McCormick abides by the rules. Rodney stated he was not being derogatory just trying to say his dislike of receiving certain emails. He said from now on if an individual wants to speak to him to either send certified mail to him or take him to court. The Commission thanked Rodney for his comments.

Department Reports/Department Head Comments

Auditor Tim Stabosz stated he has been working seamlessly with the Treasurer/Deputy (former Auditor/Deputy) and he appreciates it. Auditor Stabosz said he is aware that the Treasurer will retain oversight with the county credit card as well as the Michigan City Courthouse Project however he is unclear about the legalities of the Cares Act, the delegation of it to the Treasurer versus the Auditor. Auditor Stabosz requested documentation stating the delegation to the Treasurer. **President Mrozinski** suggested the Auditor discuss it with the Attorney or make an appointment to discuss this topic. **Auditor Stabosz** replied he is bringing it up because items were put on a previous agenda by the prior Commissions without discussing it with him as the 'incoming' Auditor. **Attorney Shaw Friedman** clarified on the record that "the current Treasurer, Ms. Winski, is on the Covid Committee, all claims, including Cares Act claims, will still come to the Auditor's office so nothing has been done to transfer authority from the current Auditor to the Treasurer. What that Resolution did was to provide an opportunity for the - to delegate to the current Treasurer, who's been involved with Cares Act submissions, the opportunity to sit on the Cares Act Committee, to participate with the Cares Act Committee in allocations and then every single allocation and appropriation still has to go through the Auditor's office so you (Auditor) have the final say on any of those appropriations as County Auditor. Nothing has changed in that so I hope that clarifies to some extent the authority that was given." **Auditor Stabosz**, "Thank you."

Commissioner Haney, "It's my understanding that the submissions that go at least to the state and federal level are all done, we're completely done with that?" **Attorney Friedman**, "That's correct." **Commissioner Haney**, "The Cares Act Fund that we're currently referring to is a county creation and earmarked; right?" **Attorney Friedman**, "That's correct." **Commissioner Haney**, "Alright, and all of that money currently sits - that's from that - currently sits in the General Fund?" **Attorney Friedman**, "That's right, that is correct Mr. Haney. It's been earmarked for Cares Act uses, you've got a Cares Act Committee that I believe Mr. Mrozinski sits on, a

couple of Council members. The current Treasurer has been delegated to sit on that committee but all of those claims - because it is General Fund - still have to go through the Auditor's office." **Commissioner Haney**, "But there is no requirements from either the state or the federal government - now that - because that money was reimbursed there is no requirements to use that for anything in particular? Theoretically, if we needed to go out and buy a snowplow truck, for example, which we don't but if we did we could take that money, because it's not encumbered to any particular purpose, just a creation of the previous Commission and Council; correct?" **Attorney Friedman**, "It would be our suggestion, from an audit posture, that that be used for Cares Act related type activities. The problem always comes later on when State Board of Accounts comes in and says, 'well, did you use the allocation for anything related?' and there is a full list of potential uses and I'll be happy to provide that to the entire Commission." **Commissioner Haney**, "I understand that was prior to December 31st, 2020, when we got that reimbursement but the reimbursement was - we were reimbursed based upon what we had already submitted so technically there would be nothing for the State Board of Accounts to come back on us on but my main point here is that all 3.6 million dollars was already spent and was already reimbursed from the actual Cares Act not the local creation so the money that's come back is a reimbursement, it's not a" **Attorney Friedman**, "And you saw that email I sent you and a little explanation on what happened. They were operating on a reimbursement basis for several months when the State became concerned in October or November that much of the 300 million had not been claimed by cities and counties, they said fine, just submit us all your public health and safety appropriations whether Cares Act or not and we'll dole the money out and then it is up to you all, as local entities, to make decisions on - from there. It's our recommendation however that based on the fact that those were Cares Act Funds that they be used for Cares Act purposes and again there's a full list that runs the gamut from whether it's repair of ventilation systems or ..." **Commissioner Haney**, "Absolutely, I appreciate that Attorney Friedman and if you'll remember in October I'd come up and I had spoken that we should pursue that route as the quickest and easiest way to do that - I'm glad we went that route." **Auditor Stabosz**, "Clarification for the Auditor if I may Commissioners, the Cares Act Committee is the ultimate decider on the spending; is that correct?" **Attorney Friedman**, "Only on smaller amounts. For instance, if the Council and Commission have allocated and they have done before, for instance \$200 - \$300,000 to the Cares Act Committee to use, there'll have to be another decision made by the Council in tandem with the Commission as to how much money to dedicate to that Committee to use for smaller purposes, other than that everything comes to the full Council and Commission." **Auditor Stabosz**, "Thank you." **Commissioner Haney**, "One last thing, is there a dollar amount for those smaller amounts? Is there some sort of break there?" **Attorney Friedman**, "I think the Committee's had some discretion on smaller amounts and you all will have to decide and tandem with the Council what you feel is an appropriate next batch amount that you want to provide to the Covid Committee."

Requests

Considered agreement for La Porte County Sheriff's Office to transfer ownership of retired K9 Jager to Deputy Andrew Morse - John Boyd, Sheriff. Jager is a 10 year old German Shepherd and is being retired early due to a diagnosis of cardio myopathy and spinal issues. Jager has been with his handler since 2013. **Commissioner Haney motioned to approve. Commissioner Matias seconded. Motion carried.**

Considered 60 unused sick days for George Ritter in Superior Court 3 who is retiring - Jeff Thorne, Judge. **Commissioner Haney motioned to approve. Commissioner Matias seconded. Motion carried.**

Old Business

Considered 2nd/final reading for re-zoning R4 to B2 in Springfield Township - Whitney Pizzala. **Commissioner Matias motioned to approve. Commissioner Haney seconded. Motion carried.**
Second/Final reading for Dollar General. *Ordinance 2021-1**

ORIGINAL

New Business

Considered contract for Marissa Lynch (G2 Strategies) regarding lobbying legislature to obtain favorable 'hold harmless' language protecting La Porte County share of gaming tax proceeds from new and-based casinos in South Bend and Gary. **Commissioner Matias** stated last time she tabled this item, was not in favor of it, it was a way to save taxpayers money however this time she is concerned with the impact of changes of the revenue split at the state level and the impact for La Porte County, Michigan City, City of La Porte, everyone shares a piece of the revenue. Is there a need for this? **Attorney Friedman** stated ordinarily contract recommendations are not brought to our first meeting of the year, generally it is at the 2nd meeting however the legislature is in session now. Currently Marissa is working on a 'hold harmless' language to protect our county share. **Commissioner Haney** questioned the cost difference over the last 3 years. **Commissioner Haney** motioned to table this item in hopes that G2 would propose a less amount per month. **Attorney Friedman** stated both Representative Pressel and Senator Bohacek support G2 Strategies to attend the meetings on our county's behalf to protect our interest. **Commissioner Matias** would not second the motion to table but had a few questions. **Commissioner Haney** then amended his motion to approve the contract but in the amount of \$4,700. **Commissioner Matias** said gaming is critical to many of our communities' budgets. She would request a report from the lobbyist. **President Mrozinski** said he spoke to both Senator Bohacek and Representative Pressel, he understands the job of a lobbyist. Not sure about the amount of the cost. **Commissioner Haney** added the report to his motion request. He clarified his **motion as approval of G2 Strategies proposal to represent La Porte County in the amount of \$4,700 (vs. \$6,000 which is on the current contract) per month for 4 months with a report to the Commission.** **Commissioner Matias seconded the motion. Motion carried 2-1 with President Mrozinski abstaining.**

Considered amending La Porte County Covid-19 Employee and Operations Policy. **Commissioner Haney** stated the policy will extend the date of January 31st to March 31st for county employees. **Attorney Friedman** clarified the two additions to the agenda as Extension to the Emergency Paid Leave Act Policy and amending the Operations Policy which extends the closing of the buildings for another two weeks and then be reviewed with other officials. **Commissioner Haney motioned to approve the Amended La Porte County Covid-19 Employee and Operations Policy. Commissioner Matias seconded. Motion carried.**

Considered extending the Emergency Paid Sick Leave Act Policy Enacted under the Families First Coronavirus response act. **Commissioner Matias motioned to approve the extension. Commissioner Haney seconded. Motion carried.**

Commissioner Comments

Commissioner Matias stated the Commission has stressed transparency the last several years especially on the county website. Public Comment is meant to talk about issues that are relevant to the general well-being of the public. Be respectful, be kind and cordial in the public setting.

Commissioner Haney said he has received emails and calls about the Covid vaccine. Currently working with the State to be sure the vaccine gets distributed as quickly as possible here in the county. By appointment only right now and goes by priority. Not open to the public and no walk-ins allowed at this time. He also spoke about re-opening the buildings to the public. There are consequences for doing nothing and doing something and take responsibility for our actions and inactions. When businesses are closed people's livelihoods are affected which can lead to spousal abuse, child abuse, drug and alcohol abuse. In some counties across the country right now drug overdoses are surpassing Covid deaths. In closing thoughts Commissioner Haney is excited for the future, this is his first time running for office. He quoted Walt Disney, "It's kind of fun to do the impossible." The job as Commissioner is not impossible but fun to take a different outlook and approach and see the positive feedback from department heads and various folks as we move forward. Looking forward to working on new projects like the EMS building on highway 20 in Rolling Prairie, the Franklin Street Bridge needs repair, thanked the Health Department for their hard work, thanked the highway department for their

work after the ice storm, EMS and Sheriff's department as well. Everyone with NIPSCO has had their power restored after the storm.

Commissioner Rich Mrozinski stated he is looking forward to the next 4 years. A lot of accomplishments the last 14 years. The draw bridge in Michigan City needs repairs. There will be a workshop held between the Council and Commissioners to address this issue on January 13th. Bridge is scheduled to open on March 15th. Commissioner Mrozinski had a 'wish list' of 5 items: 1) Pilot Program to lease vehicles; 2) Code Enforcement in the county; 3) In-House Printing brought back; 4) Bridge naming program and 5) Part-Time Veterans Service Officer should be making more than \$13.00 an hour.

Commissioner Haney motioned to adjourn; seconded by **Commissioner Mrozinski** at 10:59 a.m.

EXAMINED AND APPROVED BY THE
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS OF THE
COUNTY OF LA PORTE, INDIANA

DATE: 20-2021


ATTEST: _____ Auditor

LA PORTE COUNTY, INDIANA

ORIGINAL